

The Passing Show

The Talk's Bright in 'Jane' But the Play Grows Dull

By Jay Cormody
(Drama Editor of The Star)

NEW YORK. You would think a matinee audience would be the one with which to see "Jane," the inspired Somerset Maugham story which has been enlarged and remodeled as a comedy for Broadway by S. N. Behrman.

Matinee audiences, unlike any other kind it seems, are almost childishly eager to be pleased. So, frankly, was this roving critic with regard to "Jane." It always has been a favorite—this tale of a middle-aged frump who took London society by storm—and he also lived for years with the notion that it would make a delightful comedy.

Well, it did not work out that way. The matinee audience seemed charmed by Maugham and Behrman, and by Edna Best, Basil Rathbone and the other players. However, not even his old enthusiasm for Jane's piquant personality evoked any echo for the retouching job produced by the Theater Guild at the Coronet on West Forty-ninth street.

"Jane" turns out to be pretty much a thin and waning little comedy which not even the most nobly intentioned acting can infuse with the sharp wit on which the Maugham original impaled so many society types he dislikes. True, many of Jane's shrewd and shudderingly honest comments on London's aristocrats and their manners are amusing. Nevertheless, even these suffer from an apparent recent excess of Shaw and Wilde. These two leave even a playwright of Behrman's cleverness little to sound like save a talented parrot.

Had the latter written a structurally better play and one that might have been more invitingly directed by Cyril Ritchard, this judgment might sound like sheer churlishness. Behrman's new setting for "Jane" is nothing like so congenial as the original, however. Some unhappy consequences will have to go with that.

On the other hand, it is acted with so much verve at times that it may strike you as just plain silly, which is a chance you'll have to take. The Japanese do not deal with frothy subjects in their photo-plays, or at any rate they have not done so here. Man's inhumanity to man and the possibility that there may be a little hope for him in spite of it all is the subject under scrutiny in "Rashomon."

It is examined by way of a rather violent incident in a forest 1,200 years ago, in a time of strife and famine. The film opens with a poor woodcutter and a priest sitting in the shelter of a half-ruined city gate, the rashomon, sadly pondering this cruel event. A bandit, inflamed by the sight of a well-turned ankle, has followed a man and his wife into the woods, ravished the wife and killed the husband.

With his capture, "Rashomon" sets about the description of the crime as seen by several different pairs of eyes. This waxes a little repetitious, but there is wonderful subtlety in it. The bandit tells his story, full of bravado. The woman tells the same story, told through a writhing medium Judith Anderson, who has loved to play a form of testimony applied to a crime scene in Japanese police courts in 751 A. D.

Finally, after these varied tales have been recounted to a cynical citizen who has come in out of the rain to join the priest and woodcutter, the woodcutter breaks down and admits that he was an eyewitness to the whole affair. In his account every one appears ridiculous, the two men getting into a clumsy, animal brawl only after being goaded into it by the shrieking woman, who has been abandoned by both of them. Through it all the priest's heart sinks lower and lower, but in the end he has his faith restored, and he would have been in Hollywood.

There is no counterpoint of comedy, intentionally at least, in "Rashomon," but Director Achira Curosawa has made it an intriguing picture, occasionally an exciting one. He accents a lot of his dramatic effect, it might be noted, with the throbbing of an increasing taut, Ravel-like bolero.

The far-from-inscrutable cast is headed by Toshiko Mifune, who gets quite stormy at times as the bandit, and Michiko Kyo, who has a Barbara Stanwyck type field day as the woman so shabbily used by bandit and husband.

River (fame) who speaks for young love in the chorus of older voices echoing middle-aged disillusionment. Edith Van Katsow designed the set for "Jane" and no one could ask for a more congenial and cozy play pen for London's prewar aristocrats.

It is not at all to the dramatic advantage of "Jane" that as the play's co-star, Rathbone is rather an incidental character in Miss Best's orbit. He is a realist who is delighted by her flair for ruthless honesty of judgment and truth telling, but he lies outside the range of it. He is present as a sort of commentator on the proceedings and the people involved in them and he gets at least one spectator the feeling that he was not enjoying HIMSELF either.

Much more effective use is made in "Jane" of Irene Brown in the role of Jane's sister-in-law. Miss Brown is a remarkably informed actress on the ironies implicit in contemporary manners, and on the motivations of those who make social use of these. She is a decidedly valuable asset to the conversational walkway that flows through the three acts of "Jane."

Her contribution, however, represents something of a waste, if not so much a one as a love, high-spirited Adrienne Corri (of "The

Made in Japan

Prize-Winning 'Rashomon' Is Dramatic Fare

"RASHOMON," a Diasei picture, produced by Diasei, directed by Achira Curosawa, screenplay by Ruzumochi Akutawa. At the Dupont.

The Cast: Toshiko Mifune, Michiko Kyo, Masakazu Morioka, Takashi Shimura, Masayuki Chikashi, Kichiro Ueda, Fumiko Homma, Daisuke Kato.

By Harry MacArthur

Now it is the Japanese who come along with evidence of a flourishing talent for film-making in "Rashomon," at the Dupont. Grand prize winner at the 1951 Venice Film Festival, "Rashomon" is an impressive motion picture, handsomely photographed and acted with a great deal more verve than you are likely to have been expecting of an Oriental cast.

On the other hand, it is acted with so much verve at times that it may strike you as just plain silly, which is a chance you'll have to take. The Japanese do not deal with frothy subjects in their photo-plays, or at any rate they have not done so here. Man's inhumanity to man and the possibility that there may be a little hope for him in spite of it all is the subject under scrutiny in "Rashomon."

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Where and When

Current Theater Attractions
And Time of Showing

Stage.
New Gayety—"Paris '90"; 8:30 p.m.

Screen.
Ambassador—"Room for One More"; 1:15, 3:20, 5:25, 7:30 and 9:35 p.m.

Capitol—"The Girl on the Bridge"; 11:00 a.m., 1:45, 4:30, 7:15 and 10 p.m. Stage: 12:40, 3:25, 6:10 and 8:55 p.m.

Columbia—"Quo Vadis"; 11:35 a.m., 2:40, 5:45 and 8:55 p.m.

Dupont—"Rashomon"; 1:25, 4:25, 6:15, 8:05 and 10 p.m.

Keith's—"A Girl in Every Port"; 11:50 a.m., 1:50, 3:55, 5:55, 7:55 and 10 p.m.

Little—"Cage of Gold"; 5:40, 7:05, 8:35 and 10:05 p.m.

Metropolitan—"I'll See You in My Dreams"; 11:15 a.m., 1:20, 3:30, 5:35, 7:45 and 9:55 p.m.

National—"Dante's Inferno"; 11:30 a.m., 1:30, 3:35, 5:35, 7:40 and 9:45 p.m.

Ontario—"Detective Story"; 1:30, 3:40, 5:50, 7:50 and 10 p.m.

Palace—"Decision Before Dawn"; 11:35 a.m., 2:10, 4:45, 7:20 and 9:55 p.m.

Pix—"Hitler's Strange Love Life"; 2:25, 4:15, 6:05, 7:55 and 9:40 p.m.

Playhouse—"Great Expectations"; 8:45 p.m.



HEADLINER—Roberta Quinlan, television singing star, is featured in the new stage show at the Capitol Theater.

Capitol—"The Girl on the Bridge"; 11:00 a.m., 1:45, 4:30, 7:15 and 10 p.m. Stage: 12:40, 3:25, 6:10 and 8:55 p.m.
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AMUSEMENTS.

PATRICK HAYES CONCERTS.

THIS SAT., FEB. 9—8:30 P.M. Constitution Hall

TICKETS DATED NOVEMBER 17th HONORED ON FEBRUARY 9th

Seats: \$1.80, \$2.40, \$3.00, \$3.60

NEXT MON., FEB. 11—8:30 P.M. Constitution Hall

FRED WARING

WITH ALL THE PENNSYLVANIANS

Benefit Alexandria Hospital—Seats: \$1.80, \$2.50, \$3.25, \$3.75

HAYES CONCERT BUREAU (in Campbell Music Co.)

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